133 mountains, notably the Chin-ling and Mei-chang, forming the boundaries of southern Shensi and northern Szechwan. Water separates the low lands between the mountains, and there are several notable basins such as Han-chung Basin. Except in the Chin-ling section, the mountain range is rather bare and has little vegetation. The slopes along the Chi-lien-shan are strewn with pebbles, stone debris, and red deposits of the gravels. Valleys form vast corridors several miles wide between the mountain ranges. In the central area, where the topography is more level, pebbles, sand dunes, pastures, and swamps appear. The Chi-lien-shan region is suitable primarily for a grazing economy. However, most of the flat [241] land in the valleys has been opened for agricultural use. Spring wheat, millet, linseed, and colze are grown nearly everywhere in the region and form the major foodstuffs of the people.

The Chi-lien-shan is the major mountain range in this section [103] of Northwest China. It has received various names. The eastern end of the range is called the Liu-pan-shan or the "six coil mountain." The upper Yellow River cuts a gap through the links of the mountain range so that the Liu-pan-shan is an isolated mountain from which the Yellow River runs north and northeastward. The Wei River, one of the major tributaries of the Yellow River, runs along the south edge of the Liu-pan-shan eastward to Shensi Province, along the northern piedmont of the Chin-ling-shan eastward to Shensi Province, along the northern piedmont of the Chin-ling-shan. North of the Wu-sha-ling, or Dark Sand Peak, 120 miles northwest of Lanchou, a narrow strip of land extends along the northern foot of the Ch'i-lien-shan. From here westward, the land is relatively flat and plain. This area is called the Kansu Corridor. It is the important passageway to the Northwest of China.

All streams, as well as meltwater, come down from the Ch'i-lien-shan and run toward the north or northeast. Some streams disappear into the desert after a short distance. This is the case almost everywhere in Northwest China. This is one of the main reasons why agricultural products cannot be evenly distributed and dependably developed in the area.

Geologically speaking, the Tertiary formation appears in a number of basins in Kansu Province. The beds are generally composed of red clays, conglomerates, red sandstones, and gypsum. The geological structures remain the same to the mountain ranges of both the north and the south, the Ch'i-lien-shan and the Ho-li-shan, which is submerged into the Mongolian Gobi and the semi-steppes. They are mainly composed of Silurian and Devonian structures resting unconformably on older

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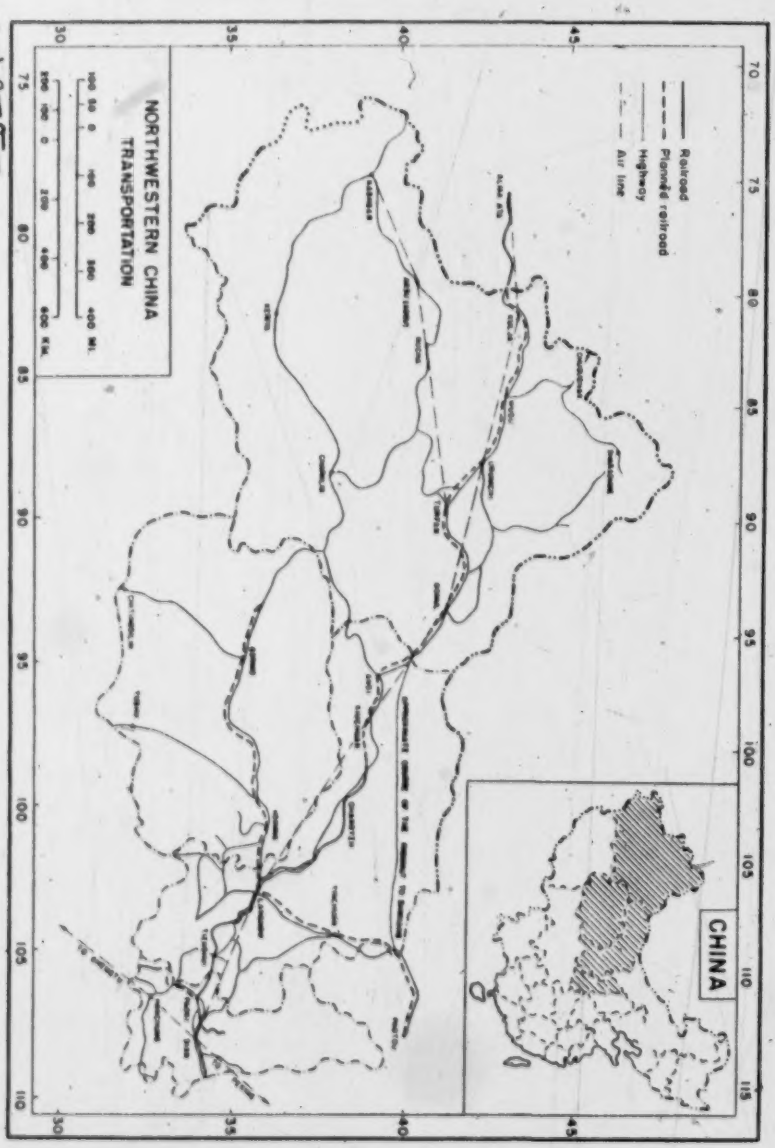


[following page 704]

2: Teichman G-5 (1919) 1921 AF13 Northwest China AF13



The pronunciation of Hsingan on the Han River and Hsian, the provincial capital in the Wei River basin, is almost identical, and as the Chinese themselves sometimes misunderstand one another when referring to them in conversation, it is rather a hopeless task for the foreigner. The two names are really Hsing-ngan and Hsi-ngan. If one wishes to make certain of being understood one should refer to Hsingan by its old name of Hsingan Chou or its new one of Ank'ang Hsien (not really new as this was always the name of the district), and to Hsian as Hsian Sheng or Ch'angan Hsien.

The American Railway Group, having secured the concession for the construction of a certain mileage of railways in China wherever they could find room between the staked out claims of other Powers, have, according to the newspapers, elected the upper Han valley as one of the scenes of their activities, and propose, it is said, to build a line from Laoho K'ou up the valley of the Han into Shensi, and thence across the mountains into Szechuan. In view of the richness of the country it will tap, and to the fact that it is not unlikely to be the first line to solve the great problem of the railway penetration of Szechuan, the object of so many schemes, this Han Valley Railway constitutes one of the most interesting and attractive of the many railway propositions at present in contemplation in China.

We remained at Hsingan two days, during which it rained incessantly. The climate of the Han valley is rather a treacherous one and fevers are common. We were now bound up the Han basin to Hanchung, a distance of 650 li. The road we followed is the main highway through this region, though much of the way only a mountain footpath eighteen inches wide. Most of the traffic, however, goes by river. Like most of the roads in the Han basin it is really a track for coolie porters, but mules and ponies can travel by it easily enough except for one stage along the Han River beyond Shihch'uan, which is rather dangerous for pack animals. As the main road connecting two such important places as Hsingan and Hanchung it well illustrates the extraordinarily roadless condition of China. Nor in these days of railway construction is it likely that China will ever be provided with roads as the word is understood in other civilized

487 the Wei River and the upper Yellow River. North of it the loess is still more compact, and on the way to the largest loess dune there was almost no better way of getting through. It is only when one again gets outside the Great Wall - as we have seen - that there is a larger trade route, from Tai yüan fu through Sui de tschou and to Ning tiao leang, but it permits wagon traffic only along certain stretches and leads across the Hwang Ho between the provinces of Shansi and Shensi, but in not a very comfortable fashion. The next larger traffic artery which conveniently connects the west with the east is the Kweihwa - Bau tu - Ninghsia road which avoids the Yellow River but leads through nomad country and thus its safety is entirely dependent on the more or less peaceful behavior of these nomads, and thus also for political reasons it has for centuries not been regarded as a large traffic artery.

631 But Lanchow fu is not merely the Hwang Ho bridgehead of the "silk road"; it is also the juncture of the roads leading up from South Kansu and Szechwan, as well as for the Tibetan roads that come from Hsining fu and Ho tschou. For this reason the city has also been made the seat of the tsung tu or tschi t'ai of Schen kan, that is, the residence of a vice-regent. Under the Manchu dynasty, under Emperor Kien lung around the middle of the 18th century, when Chinese power headed by Manchu had completely overcome the Kalmuk and the large territories of the West had to be newly conquered, the old, large province of Shensi was divided up into a smaller Shensi and a Kansu. (1) At that time the position of tsung

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1. The name Kansu (pronounced: Gan su) was formed from the characters of what were once the two most important cities in the western part of the province: Kanchow and Suchow. Shensi means "west of the pass"; it is the country that lay west of the strait of Tung kwan ting which we learned about in the second chapter. Shenkan, therefore, means the vice-kingdom of Shen (si) and Kan (su).

As a result of the last revolution the title of Tsung tu has now been abandoned and replaced by Tu tu.

tu, of the viceroy or governor-general was created, who first of all acted as civil governor of Kansu, but who, besides, /150/ had the general supervision of the civil- and military administration of Shansi and the vast Central Asiatic territories, which are called Sin kiang (pronounced: Hsin Tschiang) by the Chinese, i. e., "new

inside the sleeves of one's jacket. That is what the long Chinese 437
sleeves are for. Whether I wanted to buy a pony or butter or a supply of flour, the dealer always held out his greasy and torn sleeve to me and I had to put my narrow and short European sleeve into his. Inside you pull and squeeze each other's fingers, and the people standing around cannot see what is going on. /174/ At first not a word is spoken. If it is a question of a larger article, a pony or some such thing, not only the two parties involved in the deal but soon all their companions and acquaintances, even the gapers in the streets slip their arms into each others' sleeves. Nothing delights a Chinese more than a little deal of this kind. They curse each other or laugh at each other. "Too much!" - "You're crazy!" - "I don't intend to give my nag away!" - thus the voices shout in confusion; but no one says anything about price. The one who wishes to name a price always so and so many fingers into the sleeves of the other. The index finger alone means one, index and middle finger together mean two, and so on up to five. Six is thumb and little finger; seven, thumb, index finger and middle finger. In order to express eight one spreads out one's thumb and index finger. Nine is the index finger bent in the shape of a hook. After ten the procedure is repeated, for everyone knows enough about business to know whether a thing is worth one, ten, or a hundred taels. Sixteen, for instance, is expressed by first holding out the index finger and then gathering together the thumb and little finger with it. While this procedure is going on many an importunate little deserter looks for better hunting grounds; for what inland Chinese does not have lice in the sleeves of his jacket?

My plan was now in winter, as long as it was coldest and the ice 000
was thickest, to go to the "blue lake," the "Koko Nor" (1) in order

1. The "blue lake" of Northeast Tibet is today most com- 103
monly known through the Russian travelers by its Mongolian name of Kuku nor. Kuku, or Küke, as it is written, means "blue." The Chinese call the lake Hsi hai or "west sea" or also Tsch'ing hai, meaning "blue sea." The Tibetans call it Ts'o sngon bo or, slurred, Ts'o ngombo which also means "blue lake."

to explore it very thoroughly and above all to plumb its depth. The 000
lake is already beyond the region in which it is possible in an emergency to get along with the Chinese language; it lies above

361 and the Mongols because through them the land was united with the kingdom and has remained thus ever since.

continues to be broad and rises evenly. It continues to be monotonous. After a little more than 20 kilometers, one comes to the town of Tschen hai pu, opposite which on the north side of the river lies the town of To ba (pronounced: Do ba) which is also surrounded by high and strong walls. According to the old chronicles, To ba was on several occasions superior commercially to the city of Hsining. In 1895 it was the chief headquarters of the Mohammedan insurrection. And when at that time the Chinese again gained the upper hand, this was the place that continued to be defended for a long time with great tenacity and with the courage of despair. Now To ba lies in ruins. Only a few farmers and small merchants cling to their native soil. The old mosque which Rockhill once visited and which was supposed to have been erected by Emperor Kang hi, has been leveled to the ground.

133 Above these two towns one leaves the rolling hilly country of the Hsining basin. From the treeless, loess-covered clay and sandstone mountains one suddenly comes into a high, stern and wild rocky mountain range consisting of granite and of slate which shows marked folds.

485 I did not reach Dankar (1) until twelve midnight and had the

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1. On maps one often sees the name "Tan kar." The name is pronounced Dankar. This is the Sinicized form of the Mongolian word Dunkur. This latter name applies to the whole district and there is also a small Buddhistic monastery by that name, a day's journey south of the city (see p. 280 ff.).

greatest difficulty finding lodgings even outside the gates in the open suburb. (2) All the inns were crowded with fish dealers who

2. The once flourishing suburb occupied by Mohammedans was treacherously attacked and devastated by the Chinese inhabitants of the city during the great rebellion. Many thousands of Mohammedans were killed.

come up from Lanchow fu in winter time. There was nowhere a

The crumbled loam walls and the old roofless yamen and temple buildings lay bleak and desolate when we passed through. We were still merely crawling along at a snail's pace. In the interior of the city, in a corner of an old ruin, we brewed our tea once more before we traveled on into the night. In spite of our weariness, none of us wanted to spend the night here. The cold which set in anew after sundown was too intense. We preferred to fumble along across the barren steppes. Even though we were now going along a well-traveled caravan road, we had difficulty in finding our way in the dark to Schara khoto. We did not reach it until morning. We had covered 140 kilometers on our flight. All of us had sore feet from the solidly frozen riding boots, and the three rescued ponies were also near exhaustion because they were too heavily loaded.

Schara khoto (1) is today the farthest Chinese military outpost from Kansu. The Chinese government had stationed here a schu be (first lieutenant), a lieutenant and a few sergeants with 30-40 men (belonging to the green banner). They were armed with swords and matchlocks and a few old German drums and French horns. Thus, the detachment does not play a very important role. The soldiers even have difficulty defending themselves against the attacks of marauding Tibetans. There is an old wall but it is so large that it would take at least a regiment to defend it. There is also a large old parade ground. Between this and the city which is empty today there live about thirty Chinese families who cultivate a few small acres in the vicinity, raising barley and wild oats. Nothing else grows here. It is an unspeakably miserable spot.

One of the Chinese immediately received us very hospitably in his mud hut, and turned over his large warm kang to us. Without wasting any words he immediately prepared a few opium pipes for us, for the Chinese say this is the best restorative if one is over-tired. I was the only one who did not smoke and I did not wake up until the next night, whereas my companions, all of whom had smoked, walked about vigorously early in the day.

Two days later I traveled back to Dankar. On this stretch I was accompanied by fifteen armed men and half way to the city I was

1. A Mongolian name meaning "yellow city." The Chinese call the town Scha la ku to and say that this means "city of the green meadow."

and narrow ridges. (2)

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2. Ts'aring Nor (written skya rengs according to Ch. Das) is the Mongolian name for the western one of the two large lakes of the Hwang Ho which were discovered in 1884 by Prschevalski. In 1904 I stood on the shore of the eastern lake, Noring Nor (Mongolian). There the character of the landscape is still quite the same. There, too, are found low, rounded hills between swampy hollows. The Tibetan names of these lakes: "Ts'o schdyara," "Ts'o ngora," are more common than the Mongolian ones. (The Meng gu yu mu dyi calls the lakes Tsha ring and O ring, in which ring means "long," o (Tibetan ngo means "blue," and tscha means "white.")

133 On a ride with Tschang over the eastern part of the Sea of Stars I made good time. There were countless dunes on which some grass was just sprouting, and three broad branches of the Soloma that were always more than one meter deep, as well as accumulations of loess-like dust hard by impassable swamps and between flat lakes. For a long time these formations seemed to comprise an inexplicable mixture. Even in the days that followed when I traveled along the northern edge of the Sea of Stars, I often asked myself how it was possible that desert and swamp could be so close together here. Even though the month of August had been much drier here than June was in the Wahong Mountains, nevertheless the picture of desert and swamp did not seem to fit the climate (see p.106).

000 On August 12 I gave the order to set up camp on a pretty, sandy pasture in the plains. During the day we were only once enveloped for a few minutes /16/ by a cloud of hail. The snow-fields on the Kuenlun Mountains (1) to the south were greatly reduced as a result

1. It is not surprising that the Chinese call this relatively unimportant mountain by this name which for us means one of the largest Asiatic mountain ranges. As we have said before, for a Chinese acquainted with the locality, the name of a mountain range means only the name of a particular peak or pass. In this case, I suspect, the reverse is the case: a Chinese name that is used in some distant place was afterwards applied by officers to a certain place.